16: Cann G-5 (ca. 1928)1929 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

the depredations of hyænas, and the boys of from ten to fifteen years to clear up the standings of the cattle, collect the head ropes, and clean out the *luaks*.

By the time the boys have finished their duties the cattle are brought back to the village for milking, and the small boys leave with their herds of sheep and goats for pasture and are not seen again until nearly sunset.

Milking is accompanied by much grooming and cleaning of the cattle, and is one of the proudest hours of the Shilluk's life when he handles his beasts in view of the world.

At about 10.30 a.m. the cattle are driven to their damp pasture accompanied by an escort of fighting youths who are responsible for protection against wild beasts, reptiles and predatory human beings.

Cattle and sheep herding by day is the work of youths and boys, and is full-time employment from dawn to dusk—varied by a certain amount of fish-spearing as a recreation—so we will leave them to their duties and turn to the older men to see to what extent the stigma of laziness applies to them.

At the time of writing the first rains have fallen, so every able-bodied man who is not engaged in cattle herding leaves for his cultivation area—which is generally at least three miles inland from the village—before dawn; this early start becomes of vital importance when the dura is first sown, as the guinea-fowl descend from the trees at dawn to consume the seed sown on the previous day, and the cultivator is thus unable to leave his plot until after dusk, when these fowl have gone to roost.

Women bring food and water to the cultivator twice a day besides carrying out their ordinary household duties which we will now survey.

Shilluk villages for freedom from mosquitoes and other reasons are usually situated from one to three miles away from the Nile, and before dawn one or two women or girls from each house have to go to the river to fill all their available earthen pots and gourds with water for the use of the house before the men go away to work; the ordinary earthen vessel or *pak* when full weighs between thirty and forty pounds, and two or even three trips have to be made to the river daily to supply the needs of the home, so water carrying can only be done by the stronger women and girls.

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Chapter IV

SHILLUK LIFE

The Shilluk country is for the most part flat, low-lying grass-land. The river by constant pressure frequently breaks through its containing banks and, sweeping away the soft soil, inundates the land lying behind them. Since nothing is done to repair the broken banks, these inundations increase each year as with the rise of the Nile the waters creep ever further inland, receding only slowly with the fall of the flood waters. As a consequence of this, Shilluk villages are usually built well back from the river, at least half a mile from the highest point of the flood. Usually, too, they are built along the main road passing from Kaka to Tonga. In some areas, particularly in the Detwok-Kodok locality, villages can be found several miles inland, even up to as much as fourteen miles. In such places the people depend for their water supplies on the scum-covered water holes dug here and there. Naturally, under conditions like this personal hygiene is somewhat at a discount, and social or parochial calls present their own problems. During the dry season the Nile is the only source of water for most villages, even those situated miles away from the river. At Detwok, for instance, it is a common sight to see the women of Aguno trudging past the mission at six o'clock in the morning, having already walked five miles. In half an hour or so they will be on their way back balancing their full water-pots on their heads. They cannot reach their homes again before nine o'clock when they will have to set to work to grind millet and prepare the morning meal. If they are careful with the water it may last for two days, but then they will have to pick up the large earthenware pots and take the hated road to the Nile more than five miles off. Once when I happened to be passing through

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312 Aguno I stopped to watch a couple of men stretching and
[281] scraping a cow hide. One of them called to a girl in the village, his wife or sister, to bring him some water to soften the skin. With great reluctance she brought a large bowlful and stood by, while with lavish hand the man splashed the precious water on skin and ground indiscriminately. He then demanded more and I thought, and hoped, that she would refuse; that she would remind him that she had walked eleven burning miles to bring the water that he threw away so thoughtlessly. After a moment's hesitation, however, she picked up the bowl he had thrown at her feet and turned slowly towards the hut, but as she did so I saw two tears overflow from her brimming eyes and roll down her cheeks. Such
[562] drudgery is forced on these womenfolk by circumstance and custom, and we can only wish that things were in some way bettered.

361 But now let us proceed and see what a Shilluk village is
[487] like. We enter it along a little path which leads from the main road and passes through the dried up, yellow stubble of last season's millet plantation.

Passing through the space between the fences of two
[367] neighbouring homesteads, we come upon a large level
[535] circle of bare ground which is the playground of the village and its dancing floor. Sometimes it boasts a tree, green and leafy in contrast to its dun, dusty surroundings, under the refreshing shade of which the village elders gather to discuss
[521] the affairs of their little world: the price of cattle, the failure of the harvest, the prospect of the fishing. Under the tree, too,
[534] or at the further side of the dancing floor, are two large forked stakes driven into the ground to hold the drums. Around this circular central space the family dwellings are grouped.

[621] Villages vary in size, from the small hamlet consisting of two or three homesteads to a large settlement of sixty or seventy. An average-sized village contains about thirty families. All, however, are set up on the same plan, and the houses are built according to the same pattern. Each house-
351 hold consists of two houses set facing one another in a small

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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Father Beduschi wrote that the site of the new mission was unhealthy, and that it had no resources, unless clouds of mosquitoes and flies and armies of white ants could be called resources. As soon as the rains had ended, the new arrivals dug two wells for water, to the amazement of the natives, who could not understand the need for a well when the river was only half a mile away, and who refused to drink the water from the wells, thinking it was bewitched. Father Beduschi managed to gather a few boys together and start a school, but his work was undone by the chiefs, witch doctors, and old people who came and took the children away by force. In other ways, too, ill-luck dogged the new foundation: the few crops they had succeeded in planting in the poor soil failed; the road they had made from the mission to the river was nearly all carried away by floods; a bridge they had built was burned; a great pile of grass gathered for roofing the huts was destroyed by fire.

Father Beduschi had hoped to obtain catechists from Uganda, but when this was found impossible he borrowed some from Lul and sent them into the surrounding villages. He wrote also to the Mother General of the Verona Missionary Sisters asking her to send some Sisters to work in the mission as a present for the Silver Jubilee of his ordination and his coming to Africa. 'Detwok,' he wrote, 'is made up of thorns and crosses; I cannot promise the good Sisters anything but work and trouble; I even promise them disappointments and not consolations, but I do promise them a missionary life, and what more do they desire?' He did not live to see the Sisters arrive, for on November 10th, 1924, he died of blackwater fever, offering his life for the salvation of the Shilluk people. When he was dying, his companion, Father Brambilla, offered up to two shillings for a bottle of milk to give him, but the neighbouring villagers refused to let him have it.

Brother Joshua who was with him both at Tonga and again at the Detwok mission died eventually as a leper. In Tonga he had made friends with a leper in an effort to